



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: October 15, 1998

Contact: Patricia L. Young (202) 205-6740

Release No: 98-91

SBA News Releases: www.sba.gov/news/

SBA TO ENTER PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES TO INCREASE CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

WASHINGTON – In an unprecedented effort to increase government contracting opportunities for women business owners, Aída Alvarez, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), today announced partnership agreements with five federal agencies. With these agreements, each Cabinet secretary will commit to specific strategies to help reach the government-wide 5 percent contracting goal for women business owners.

“The agreements I am announcing today will provide a focused and sustained effort for increasing the participation of women-owned businesses in the federal contracting marketplace.” Administrator Alvarez said. “Women business owners get only about 2 percent of government contracts, even though they own nearly 40 percent of all small businesses.”

The first agency head to agree to the challenge was Department of Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater. Other Cabinet secretaries entering into partnership agreements with Administrator Alvarez include Secretary William Cohen, Department of Defense; Secretary Donna Shalala, Department of Health and Human Services; Secretary Madeline Albright, Department of State and Administrator David Barram,

General Services Administration. Together these agencies represent more than 65 percent of the overall \$200 billion federal contracting market.

The partnership agreements include innovative and productive ways that each agency will work to meet the 5 percent goal. Each Cabinet secretary is making a personal commitment to see that the goal is reached within his or her department and that staff, from agency heads to field personnel, is held accountable for reaching the goals.

The announcement came today during the 1998 Women's Economic Summit being held this week at the Michael D. Dingman Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Maryland. The Summit '98 event unites entrepreneurs, corporate executives, public policy leaders, and academics to develop strategies that address the most critical initiatives for strengthening women-led businesses. The four core initiatives include financing business growth, leadership and advocacy, market opportunities, and training.

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The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners. The SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.

America's 23 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

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